

Discussion Guide

Everything Here Is Beautiful

By Mira T. Lee



1. Many of the characters in the novel struggle to find balance between self-fulfillment and obligation to others. What would you have done if you were in Lucia's situation in the campo? Have you ever had to choose between what you want for yourself and what's best for someone you love (e.g., a child)?
2. Miranda has been caring for her younger sister since she was a child. But as an adult, what role should she play in her sister's life? Did you find her actions caring or meddlesome?
3. Is Lucia a modern woman trying to balance family, career, and personal fulfillment or is she "rash, reckless, irresponsible"? To what lengths would you go/have gone to become a mother? Is it ever *not* okay for a woman to have a child?
4. Manny has to live with the brunt of Lucia's illness. At one point he reflects: "This was love, or this was duty, he could no longer tell the difference." What is the difference? When does love turn into duty and when does duty become love? Do you consider Manny loyal, or is he simply passive? Do Manny and Lucia love each other?
5. In the book, Lee writes, "immigrants are the strongest.... Everywhere we go, we rebuild." All the characters in the novel are immigrants, rebuilding their lives in some way. But who is running away from something, and who is running toward something? How do their immigrant experiences differ?
6. How does ethnicity/culture play into this novel? Would you consider this an ethnic novel? Why or why not? Could the same story have been told if the characters were white?
7. Lucia points out that in our society, cancer survivors are viewed much differently from sufferers of mental illness. Do you agree? Do you know someone who has a mental illness? How does stigma affect our views of mental illness?
8. Anosognosia, or "lack of insight," is a frequent symptom of psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia and makes these illnesses especially difficult to treat. How do you help someone who doesn't realize they are ill? How did you feel about Manny putting pills in Lucia's tea?
9. "He tried so hard to love her—yet how best to love her still eluded him." The men in the book struggle with how best to love the women in their lives. Should Yonah have let Lucia walk out of their marriage so easily? Should Stefan have supported Miranda's efforts to help her sister at the expense of her own wellbeing? Are there right or wrong ways to love someone?

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10. Who is most to blame for Lucia's end? Herself? Yonah? Miranda? Manny? Could someone have done something differently to alter the outcome? What do you think happened to Lucia?

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